

*Home Education Evaluation of
2 Year Program
2010-2011*



D on Clean Up Australia Day, 2010 at Woodrising (West Lake Macquarie)



D at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney NSW, December 2011.



D at the NSW/ACT Unschoolers Camp, Port Stephans, 2012.

*Focusing on Early Stage 1/Stage 1 of
the NSW Board of Studies K-6 Curriculum
and using the Montessori Method*

Evaluation of a 2 Year Home Education Program
delivered 2010-2011

Facilitator	Mother's Name	Phone	XXX
Primary Location	XXXX	Mobile	XXX
Minimum Hours	9am-2pm Monday-Friday additional hours (see timetable)	E-mail	XXX

Introduction:

Home Education is a recognised option available to NSW parents and guardians when making decisions about the best form of education for their children. Home Education may be seen as an extension of the learning process that happens in the home throughout the child's development. When choosing to home educate, parents accept responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating their child's learning program. In this sense, Home Education is quite different from Distance Education, where a parent qualifies for access to educational services and programs provided by the Department of Education and Training. Parents who home-educate must provide a suitable learning environment within the family home, and provide the resources necessary to support the program. Home resources are generally supplemented by accessing community resources such as local libraries, museums and other facilities and places of interest. In NSW Home Education is subject to the registration process outlined in this package. Families with a genuine conscientious objection on religious grounds to registration for the education of their children at home may apply for exemption. This does not exempt parents from their responsibilities for providing children with a quality education and they must demonstrate that they meet the same requirements as registered home educators. A successful applicant may be issued with a Certificate of Registration for Home Schooling or a Certificate of Exemption from Registration for Home Schooling for their child for a period from six months to a maximum of two years.

Background:

When D was first born it was obvious that his head had been disfigured from the positioning he held probably for the last 2-3 months in-uterus. His right ear was pinched into a point and looked 'elf like', the bridge to his nose was depressed and flat and as a consequence the septum bone in his nose pushed through into his top palate which decreased the volume of his mouth cavity causing his tongue to protrude.

After cranial sacral and chiropractic manipulations for the first 5 years of D's life he has a nose that appears normal and can speak well enough for his age. Although D was late to talk and was difficult to understand, in 2009 he was diagnosed as above average comprehension and average for output of language, during an assessment by speech therapists. His tongue still protrudes slightly and he suffers from some pain of his palate which is relieved with pressure, such as pushing up on his palate with his thumb or my finger. He still has sensitivity to the 'feel' and smell of certain foods and has a very restricted diet as a consequence. We are continuing to investigate any residual issues through speech therapy and ear/nose/throat specialists. He also has a habit of chewing on his clothes, which I've addressed with the use of a speech therapy chew apparatus.

D's schooling started as a 3 year old when I began Home Schooling his older sister, M. He was an adventurous and capable toddler with what would be considered advanced gross and fine motor skills, probably due to his brain development focusing on building those neuron pathways associated with spatial awareness and movement instead of language, while his speech was so difficult to produce.

D can hold his attention on individual tasks for hours and this has developed his personality. He is a confident and interested person with a love of machines, designing, patterns, puzzles and drawing.

From the beginning of 2008 until midway through 2009 D attended Newcastle Montessori Preschool, located in Kotara. When he was focused on working he was a capable student who loved working. At other times D was distracted and aggressive and found it difficult to follow instructions, mix well with others or join in positively in group activities. Although there were times when D enjoyed Montessori Preschool by the middle of 2009, with M already enjoying Home Education, D made more head way with learning at home. After discussions with his teachers, an audiology test (to rule out hearing issues that could explain his behavioral issues – he's hearing is very good as it turns out) and much thought D and I decided that he could start Home Educating full time and he left the 3-6 program shortly after his 5th birthday.

Progress since Registration for Home Education:

When D initially began home educating he was just beginning to read and write phonetically, counting to 10, adding numbers to 10, he had begun developing an awareness of the world around him historically and physically through documentaries, books and interactive games that show evolution, space, plants, wildlife, volcanoes and icebergs. He had a good understanding of time both in terms of time lines and daily routines and also had a good grasp of time in relation to seconds, minutes and hours. He was also capable of interacting with staff while making purchases and become very much *part of society*.

D is a confident 8 year old who can talk confidently with people with a wide range of ages and backgrounds. He understands the difference between talking with friends and talking with a Librarian or Shop Assistant and has an excellent grasp of 'manner words'. Although D initially struggled with reading, as such has a natural dislike for 'baby books' he has bypassed most of the 'traditional readers' and has been highly motivated to read more interesting texts. Although we still use graded readers they are purposeful texts, he especially likes Steve Parish's books as they are amusing and reinforce his love of nature. He also enjoys Andy Griffiths' books and we've also borrowed the audio books to give these stories extra dimension (and also to cover specific BOS outcomes). D has been reading common word lists, blends etc as games and exercises and then applying this new mastery to familiar and new texts. He has also begun grammar exercises and he has basic understanding of Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs. We've also been reading poems, traditional stories and limericks.

D's writing has progressed from resistance to write anything to now spontaneous writing. Although he is at this moment still hesitant he will have a go, so I see this as something that will shift very soon. He plans and writes both stories and descriptive texts, both by hand and using the keyboard. His understanding of grammatical rules is naturally good. He also uses persuasive writing to not only convey a message but to influence the reader.

D's forte is Mathematics. He has a fantastic understanding of whole numbers of any size and using the Montessori materials (base ten blocks and abacus) can add and subtract numbers of any size, although the materials only allow numbers up to 9,999. On paper there is no limit to the size of the numbers. He has begun multiplication and division and uses both mental, written and concrete materials to calculate his answers. We've begun fractions and decimals, as well as percentages, using concrete materials and has begun simple addition and subtraction problems with fractions. He has a natural curiosity for chance and delights in measuring and estimating the likely outcomes for events. D is an avid designer and patterns are very much part of his drawings. Last year we purchased Minecraft, a computer simulated world. It is still his favorite designing tool and with it he has created buildings, electrical circuits, etc. A demo from him will be

the highlight of this Inspection I'm sure! Using this 'game' data gathering and analysis are interwoven as you need to collect a certain amount of blocks to make certain things. They are listed on arrays and have been a wonderful way of demonstrating data gathering as well as 4 and 8 times tables. All the outcomes for Measurement can be easily covered in Minecraft alone however D estimates and compares length, area, volume and capacity and mass and definitely time on a daily basis! Playing 'real life Minecraft' with his mates is where I can see how his learning and understanding about these complex 3 dimensional concepts are very rich indeed. He also STILL loves to draw and design on paper and he uses his knowledge of 2d/3d shapes with ease. He also is able to position his work making scaled pictures to demonstrate, for example, where a complex space craft is in relation to other space crafts, making a secondary drawing zoomed out from the original. He also labels his designs and often writes dialogue to illustrate that a 'drama' is occurring.

Keeping adults hostage while talking about any design computer program, his drawings, what's happening in his drawings etc has become his trademark at family gatherings! He has no problem communicating complex mathematical based situations.

From 2009 to 2011 D attended Joeys with Scouts Australia and Gymnastics. When we finished with both of these activities we knew those interests were exhausted and were keen to find something else. 2011 presented us with an opportunity to travel to Queensland to attend the Australian Unschooling Conference. Financially we were committed and although paid classes became a low priority we successfully substituted with our 'free excursions'! We also formed a Home Education Landcare group where D was a very active member of bush regeneration, bug and water watch, attended native flora and fauna, and weed identification seminars. In addition he has participated in learn to swim classes, plays ball games, trampolining and other games with friends, has two separate weekly playdates with M and D's friends from Montessori Preschool and with another home educating family. He visited parks on a regular basis and loves climbing. During an excursion we visited Tobogganland where D wall climbed, rode a Toboggan and played miniature golf. We also attend indoor play centers, camping and D loves bush walking, which we try to do every few weeks, as well as walking to our local fruit and veg/butchers for local shopping. D also loves dancing... but don't tell him I told you that! He also sings with his sister daily and although he is resistant to formal lessons in music, he is naturally inclined to understanding music well due to his mathematical nature. During drive time we will switch from radio station to radio station depending on what both M and D like and don't like with songs. They also role play out a 'kids radio station' where they sing, make up advertisements and give news of the day. They put on plays and make movies on a regular basis together and with other home educated and schooled children. He also loves watching parodies, plays, youtubes etc of other people's productions.

Recently our Landcare coordinator contracted Lyme from ticks near where the children had been working. Collectively we have decided to disband the group due to the risk factors to the children. Our commitment to volunteering has been transmuted into donations to charities (Below the poverty line/under \$2 a day - to help build a school in Papua New Guinea, Gracee's Appeal, MND and we're always mindful to donate what we can, when we can and understand the cause we're supporting). We've also marched for Lock The Gate on the matter of Coal Seam Gas and D has a passion and understanding about the preservation of Australia's habitat. We have an ongoing commitment towards our individual and collective roles, rights and responsibilities both to ourselves, each other and our community. D commits each week during our Monday morning meeting to a range of responsibilities not limited to academics. Each Friday he

reports on what he has successfully completed and what he hasn't and why. Every day we encounter information and situations which, knowing the BOS outcomes for K-6 like I do, EASILY cover all strands and substrands of HSIE. This is probably where home education shines the most as we are PART OF THE ISSUES that it covers as we are out and about in the community daily. Even talking with Hilda our neighbor, who was born and lived in Austria during the 30's and 40's raises significant important issues that we discuss with her and each other. Horrible Histories, My Place and the mired of other excellent ABC resources have given us hours of pleasure as a family, sharing and learning more about this world.

Our commitment to Socialization:

Socialization. The most misused word we, as home educating people, come across. "What about socialization?" a stranger will ask. "If they are not **in school** how can they meet other children their age?" If we took this to be 'what socialization **is** then we would hardly make a successful community. Children and adults need to be able to communicate with people of a variety of ages and backgrounds, not just having the very narrow commonalities and differences that you find between same age schooled children. By the fact that we choose to home educate and **not** use schools exclusively has, over the past 6 years increased our social life manifold times.

Over the past two years D has maintained his long term friendships with two schooled children whom he attended Montessori pre-school with. He has also visited his Aunty, who is profoundly deaf, and has learnt Auslan with her. Other Aunts and Uncles, cousins and long term friends have been a regular part of his social opportunities.

D has also had the opportunity to meet on a regular basis with peers and has a great time. Our recent Unschooling Camp saw D scootering around with his mates and then on the one rainy day he had 8 boys huddled around him as he demonstrated what Minecraft was. They now have an exclusive server for the 7-13 year olds, moderated by a home educating parent, where they can build and play in a virtual playground while talking through Skype. Although many of these friends live far away a few are close by so they can meet up and play 'real life Minecraft', or 'whatever' they want too.

Excursions to date since initial registration:

- Disney on ice (with home educated and schooled children)
- Toboggonland
- Camping at the Watagan Mountains
- Toronga Park Zoo
- Reptile Fauna and Flora Park
- Hunter Valley Gardens Christmas Lights
- Great Barrier Reef
- Airlie Beach Unschooling Conference
- Regular Home Education groups for social outings, drumming classes, craft days, park play etc
- NSW/ACT Unschoolers Camp, Port Stephens
- Powerhouse Museum, Harry Potter, The Wiggles and the permanent exhibit
- Transport - trains, buses, tram, monorail, ferry, boat, glass bottom boat, canoe, pedal car
- Various Movie theatres and stage productions







